

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CA, CU

SUBJ: TRUDEAU VISIT TO CUBA; PRESS ROUND-UP

REF: OTTAWA 0353

1. AS CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO CUBA COMES TO AN END, CANADIAN PRESS HAS CONTINUED TO GIVE RELATIVELY LOW-KEY COVERAGE TO IT. JAN 29 TORONTO GLOBE AND MAIL, CANADA'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD, REPORTED STORY ON PAGE 14 AND EVENING CBC RADIO NEWS DID NOT EVEN MENTION IT IN ITS HEADLINES. HOWEVER, TORONTO GLOBE AND MAIL'S COLUMNIST GEOFFREY STEVENS DID DEVOTE ANOTHER COLUMN (REFTEL) TO VISIT WHEREIN HE REPORTS PM'S PRESS OFFICER "BLOWING UP AT THE SLOW, INCOMPETENT, OBSTINATE CUBAN BUREAUCRACY". HE ALSO REPORTS THAT VISIT TO CIENFUEGOS TRI-CONTINENTAL BULK-LOADING SUGAR PLANT WAS WORTH ANY AMOUNT OF CONFUSION AND WAITING FOR, SINCE IT TURNED OUT TO BE A "FASCINATING EXERCISE IN GROUP DYNAMICS WHICH CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBEDAS A COMBINATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, PROPAGANDA AND GOOD OLD FASHIONED CAPITALISTIC PORK BARREL POLITICS". ACCORDING TO STEVENS, CASTRO PRAISED CANADA FOR NOT BREAKING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

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WITH CUBA AND FOR THE CANADIAN AID PROGRAM. THIS WAS

FOLLOWED BY "...A ROUTINE THAT WOULD HAVE MADE THE BEST PARISH PUMPING POLITICIAN IN CANADA PROUD. HE TALKED AT LENGTH ABOUT ALL THE THINGS HIS GOVERNMENT HAD DONE."

2. TRUDEAU'S SPEECH, ACCORDING TO STEVENS, WAS "GOOD" AND "NOT UNLIKE HIS 'NEW SOCIETY' TALK OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS...HE WAS VERY CAREFUL TO STRESS THE 'BROAD DIFFERENCES' THAT EXIST BETWEEN THE CUBAN AND CANADIAN SYSTEM."

3. STEVENS CONCLUDES HIS ARTICLE BY REPORTING HOW TRUDEAU CALLED OUT "VIVA CUBA, VIVA CASTRO, VIVA CUBAN-CANADIAN FRIENDSHIP." STEVENS THINKS THAT "THESE WORDS ARE APT TO CAUSE MR. TRUDEAU TROUBLE AT HOME. THAT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE BECAUSE THE WORDS WERE BOTH EXPECTED AND INNOCENT."

4. CERTAINLY THOSE WORDS HAVE ALREADY CAUSED SOME RAISED EYEBROWS AS ONE LOCAL RADIO STATION HAS REPEATEDLY PLAYED THE TAPE RECORDING OF THEM.

HOWEVER, GENERALLY PRESS REPORTS HAVE BEEN STRAIGHT-FORWARD. JAMES FERRABEE OF THE SOUTHAM NEWS SERVICE REPORTED HOW TRUDEAU FOUND HIMSELF FREQUENTLY DEFENDING US POLICY AND EMPHASIZING THE GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN CANADA AND THE US. OTHER PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT TRUDEAU-CASTRO TALKS TOOK PLACE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF "FRIENDSHIP, SINCERITY AND UNDERSTANDING. THEY COVERED BILATERAL RELATIONS, INTER-AMERICAN PROBLEMS AND INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS". APPARENTLY THE PROBLEM OF ANGOLA WAS NOT DISCUSSED IN DETAIL, ALTHOUGH CASTRO ACKNOWLEDGED THE STAND TAKEN BY CANADA AGAINST FOREIGN INTERVENTION. IN PRAISING CANADIAN-CUBAN RELATIONS, CASTRO APPARENTLY ALSO RECALLED THAT CANADIAN COMPANIES NATIONALIZED AFTER THE 1959 CUBAN REVOLUTION "HAD RECEIVED TIMELY COMPENSATIONS".

5. EMBASSY WILL REPORT MORE FULLY ON TRIP AFTER RETURN OF TRUDEAU PARTY TO OTTAWA. JOHNSON

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